

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

41
JUNE

©
02449

THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG FU

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

**SENSATIONAL
ALL ACTION ISH!**

**MARTIAL ARTS
MADNESS**
IN THE MIGHTY
MARVEL
MANNER!

"Call me Shang-Chi, as my *father* did, when he raised me and molded my mind and my body in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father. Since then, I have learned that my father is **Dr. Fu Manchu**, the most insidiously evil man on earth...and that to *honor* him would bring nothing but *dishonor* to the spirit of my *name*.

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

MASTER OF KUNG FU!™

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

JV357

SLAIN *in* SECRECY, *and by* ILLUSION!



Featuring:

MIDNIGHT, THE
DARK DESTROYER
-- IN A RARE GLIMPSE
INTO SHANG-CHI'S
TROUBLED PAST, WHEN
BROTHERS IN THE
SPIRIT CLASH AS
ENEMIES IN THE
FLESH!

DOUG MOENCH
WRITER

SAL BUSCEMA

M. ESPOSITO
GUEST ARTISTS

JOHN COSTANZA, letterer
PETRA GOLDBERG, colorist
MARV WOLFMAN, editor

"LONDON: THE APARTMENT OF ONE OF SMITH'S FORMER AGENTS-- LARNER-- AND A PLACE NOW DESTROYED BY VIOLENCE...*

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU THREE, BUT I'M FOLLOWIN' UP THE ONLY LEAD WE'VE GOT-- THIS "ORIENTAL EXPEDITERS" PLACE.

YOU COMIN' WITH-- OR NOT?

NOT JUST YET, BLACK JACK-- WE'LL CATCH UP IF WE DECIDE YOU'RE RIGHT.

* SEE LAST ISSUE. --MARV.

"AND AS TARR LEAVES..."

WELL, LARNER? ARE YOU GOING TO OBLIGE SMITH AND COME BACK TO ACTIVE DUTY IN THE SERVICE?

I... DON'T KNOW, CLIVE. NO WAY OF TELLING WHO THE "MOLE" IS-- A DOUBLE-AGENT TURNED TRAITOR COULD BE ANYBODY WITHIN THE SERVICE...

A "MOLE" POPS UP AND SMITH WANTS ME BACK-- AFTER PERSONALLY BOOTING ME OUT THE DOOR. OBVIOUSLY, MY RETURN HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE "MOLE"-- BUT EVEN IF I FOUND OUT WHO THE "MOLE" IS, WOULD I BE ABLE TO PROVE IT?

AND IF THE PROOF IS A LITTLE TOO HARSH, WOULD IT BE ACCEPTED--?

WELL, MY GREAT-UNCLE WOULD PROBABLY SAY IT'S ALL VERY ELEMENTARY-- BUT RIGHT NOW, IT'S TOO MUCH FOR ME. I SUGGEST WE GO OUT FOR SOME TEA-- SOBER UP AND THINK ABOUT IT SOME MORE...

"LARNER'S WORDS SUMMON A MEMORY..."

YOU COMING WITH, SHANG-CHI?

HEY-- DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME--?

EH? WHAT...?

I SAID: ARE YOU COMING WITH?

...NO. WITH YOUR PER-MISSION, LARNER, I WILL REMAIN HERE FOR A TIME.

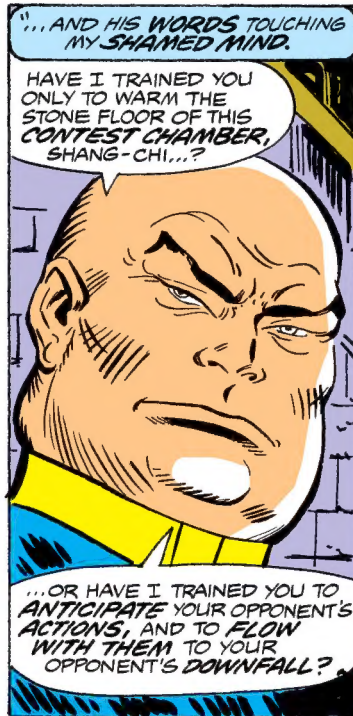
"...TO THINK... UPON LARNER'S WORDS..."

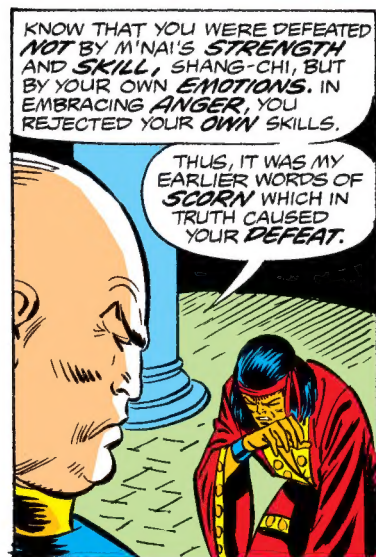
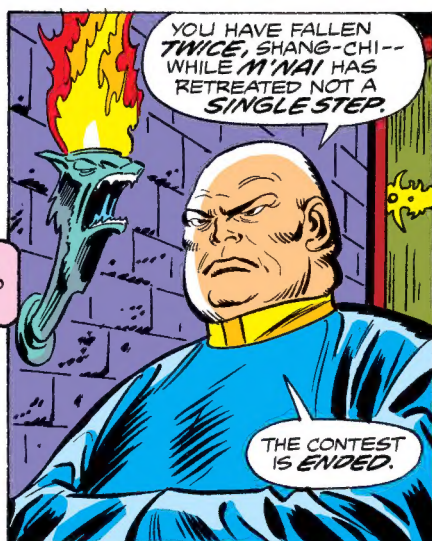
"...AND DWELL WITHIN A MEMORY..."

"...OF FOUR YEARS PAST."

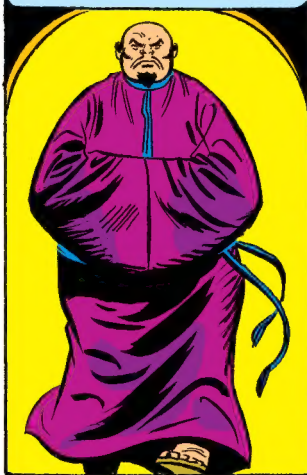
KWUD

UNGH-K--!!





"IT IS THE PRIEST **KWAN-SHU**--HE WHO ADORNS OUR TABLES WITH **FOOD**, AND WHO SELDOM VENTURES FROM HIS **KITCHEN**...



PERHAPS KWAN-SHU BRINGS NEWS OF TONIGHT'S MEAL.

IF I MAY BE **EXCUSED**, HONORABLE CHO LIN...?



THERE ARE **STUDIES** I MUST ATTEND.

VERY WELL, M'NAI. A **STRONG BODY** IS USELESS WHEN GOVERNED BY A **WEAK MIND**.

CHO LIN, WAS THAT NOT **MIDNIGHT** WHO STOOD WITH YOU A MOMENT **EARLIER**?



YES, IT WAS **M'NAI**.

WHY DO YOU **ASK**, KWAN-SHU?

CELESTIAL FU MANCHU IS GREATLY **DISPLEASED**. HE HAS DISCOVERED THE THEFT OF A QUANTITY OF **DRINK** FROM THE **CELLAR**...

...AND WISHES TO **QUESTION** MIDNIGHT UPON THE MATTER.



M'NAI--?!

STEALING THAT WHICH BELONGS TO MY **FATHER**--?!



IT IS NOT **POSSIBLE**!

YOUR FATHER BELIEVES IT **IS** POSSIBLE--AND WILL TOLERATE NO **DISAGREEMENT**!



HE WANTS MIDNIGHT **BROUGHT** TO HIM FOR **PUNISHMENT**!

NOW, WILL YOU OBEY YOUR FATHER'S WISHES--AND BRING MIDNIGHT TO HIS **PERSONAL CHAMBERS**?



BUT...M'NAI IS MY **FRIEND**--MY **BROTHER**.

"MY **ONLY BROTHER**."

NEVERTHELESS, YOUR FATHER'S **DESIRE** IS THAT YOU SHOULD **RETRIEVE** MIDNIGHT...

...AND THAT YOU SHOULD EMPLOY **FORCE** IF HE **RESISTS**.



WILL YOU **DO THIS**?

M'NAI IS MY **ONLY FRIEND**... MY **ONLY BROTHER**... AND I CAN IMAGINE HIM DOING **NO WRONG**...

AND YET, IF IT IS MY FATHER'S **WISH**...



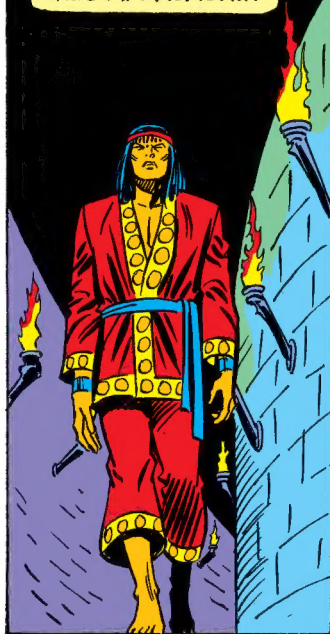


...THEN I CAN DO NOTHING LESS THAN OBEY HIM.

I WILL FIND M'NAI... AND I WILL BRING HIM TO MY FATHER FOR PUNISHMENT.

"MY STEPS ARE HEAVY AS I TRAVERSE THE CORRIDOR TO M'NAI'S CHAMBER. CAN KWAN-SHU'S ACCUSATION BE TRUE...?"

"M'NAI DID DEPART HASTILY UPON KWAN-SHU'S APPROACH..."



"NO-- IT IS NOT POSSIBLE. I HAVE LIVED WITH M'NAI SINCE WE WERE BOTH NO MORE THAN BABES-- UNTIL NOW, OUR SPIRITS WERE ONE AND THE SAME."

"STILL... WHAT IF HE SHOULD RESIST? KWAN-SHU SAID I MUST EMPLOY FORCE..."



"...THE SAME FORCE I EARLIER EMPLOYED...?"



"THE DOOR TO HIS CHAMBER HANGS SLIGHTLY OPEN."



M'NAI...?

"THERE IS NO SOUND FROM WITHIN... NOT EVEN THAT OF BREATHING."



"YET, THE TAPER STILL BURNS... AND I FEEL HIS PRESENCE, ONLY RECENTLY DEPARTED."

"HIS STUDIES... ABANDONED."



"NO, THIS IS NOT A LESSON-- IT IS A MESSAGE... TO ME."

"IT READS: 'I HAVE HEARD KWAN-SHU FALSELY ACCUSE ME OF WRONG...'"

"...AND I AM UNWILLING TO ACCEPT PUNISHMENT FOR THE EVIL COMMITTED BY ANOTHER."



"DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FIND ME, MY BROTHER, OR OUR SPIRITS SHALL NO LONGER BE AS ONE."

"IT IS NOT SIGNED."

"IT WAS NOT NECESSARY..."



"THEN M'NAI WILL RESIST, AS WELL HE SHOULD IF HE IS **INNOCENT**. BUT WHAT WILL MY FATHER SAY-- AND **DO**-- IF I FAIL TO OBEY HIS **WISHES**?"

"BEST NOT TO **THINK** UPON THAT."

"BESIDES, IF M'NAI IS **INNOCENT**, THERE IS NOTHING TO **FEAR**..."



"AND **BESIDES**, FU MANCHU IS MY FATHER..."

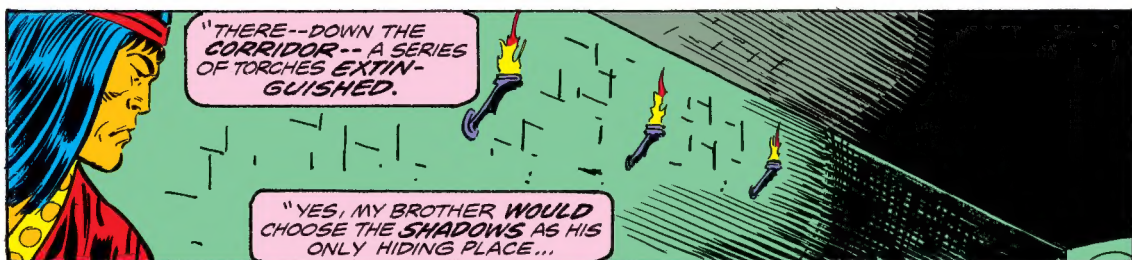
"I WILL **FIND** M'NAI."



"BUT..."

"...WHERE?"

"SURELY IN NONE OF THE **SECRET** PLACES WE HAVE **SHARED** AS OUR OWN."



"THERE--DOWN THE **CORRIDOR**-- A SERIES OF TORCHES **EXTINGUISHED**."

"YES, MY BROTHER **WOULD** CHOOSE THE **SHADOWS** AS HIS ONLY **HIDING** PLACE..."



M'NAI.

YOU CLOAK YOURSELF IN **DARKNESS**--



--WHILE I STAND ONLY IN **LIGHT**... AND ASK YOU TO **JOIN** ME."



I **WARN** YOU, MY BROTHER-- **REMAIN** IN YOUR **LIGHT**, AND COME NO CLOSER TO THE **DARKNESS** WHICH IS **MINE**."



"THERE IS NO **CHOICE**."

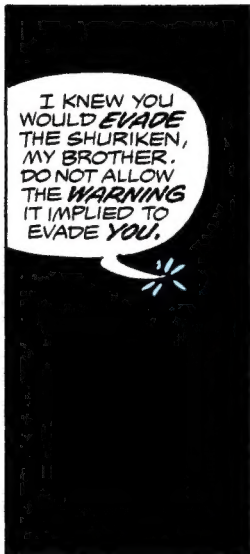
I **MUST**, MY BROTHER..."



"A **SHURIKEN**-- M'NAI'S FAVORITE **WEAPON**..."

"...HISSES FROM THE **DARKNESS**..."

"...AND **PASSES** OVER MY **HEAD**."



I KNEW YOU WOULD **EVADE** THE SHURIKEN, MY BROTHER. DO NOT ALLOW THE **WARNING** IT IMPLIED TO EVADE YOU.



TURN BACK.

NO, M'NAI--



WE BOTH KNOW THAT I CANNOT DO AS YOU ASK.

"I ENTER THE **DARKNESS** WHICH IS **HIS**..."



"**THERE!** MY EYES **ADJUST** TO THE CHANGE. I **SEE** HIM..."

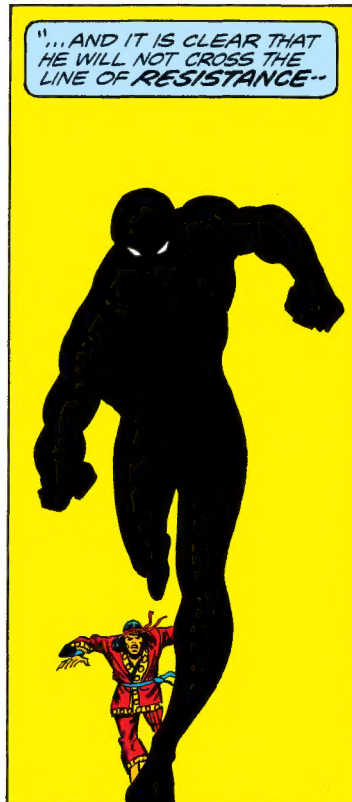
"...AS A **SHADOW**."

"THE **SHADOW** **RUNS**-- FOR IF M'NAI **WILL** RESIST, HE DOES NOT **WANT** TO DO SO..."



"THE **TORCHES** AGAIN **LIGHT** THE CORRIDOR. WE HAVE **PASSED** FROM THE REGION **BROKEN** BY M'NAI'S **DARKNESS**."

"**STILL** HE **FLEES**..."

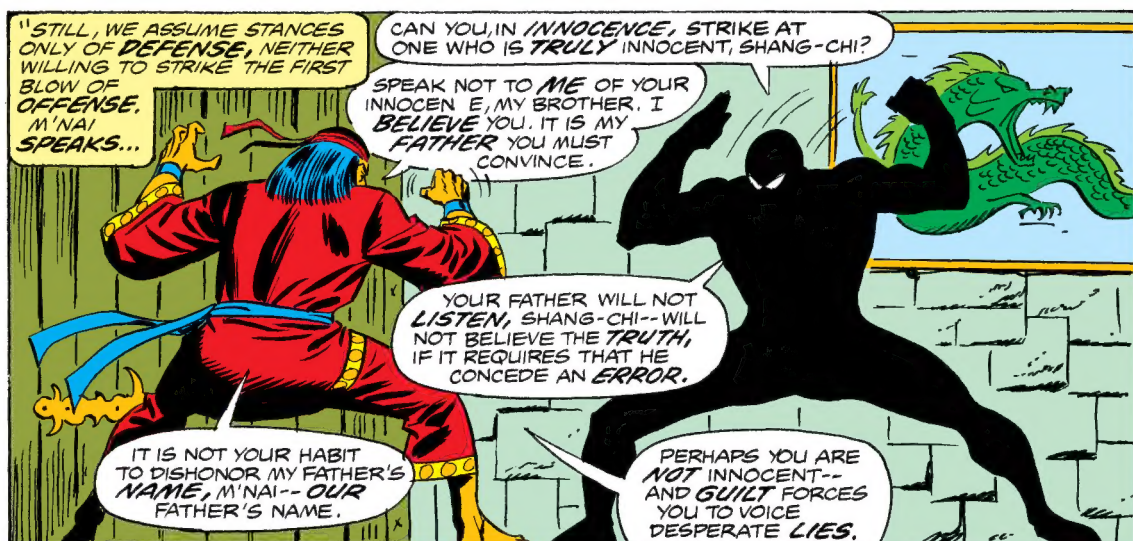


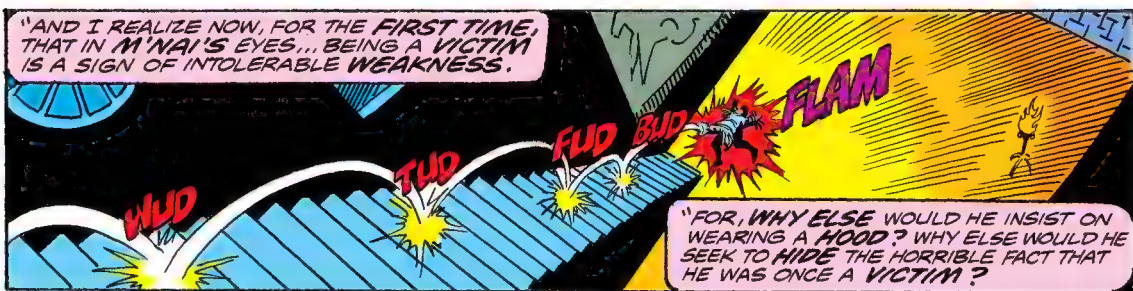
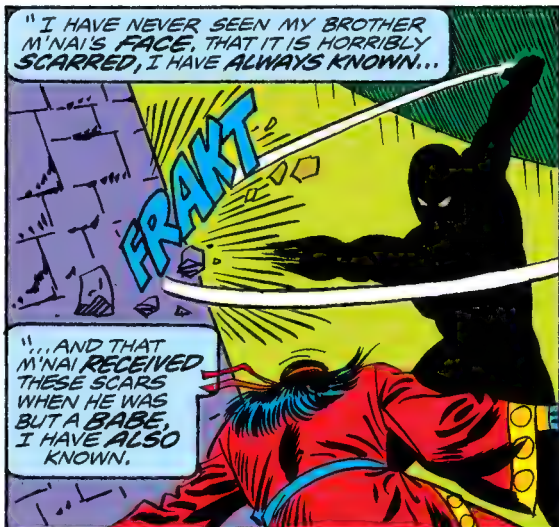
"...AND IT IS CLEAR THAT HE WILL NOT CROSS THE **LINE** OF **RESISTANCE**--

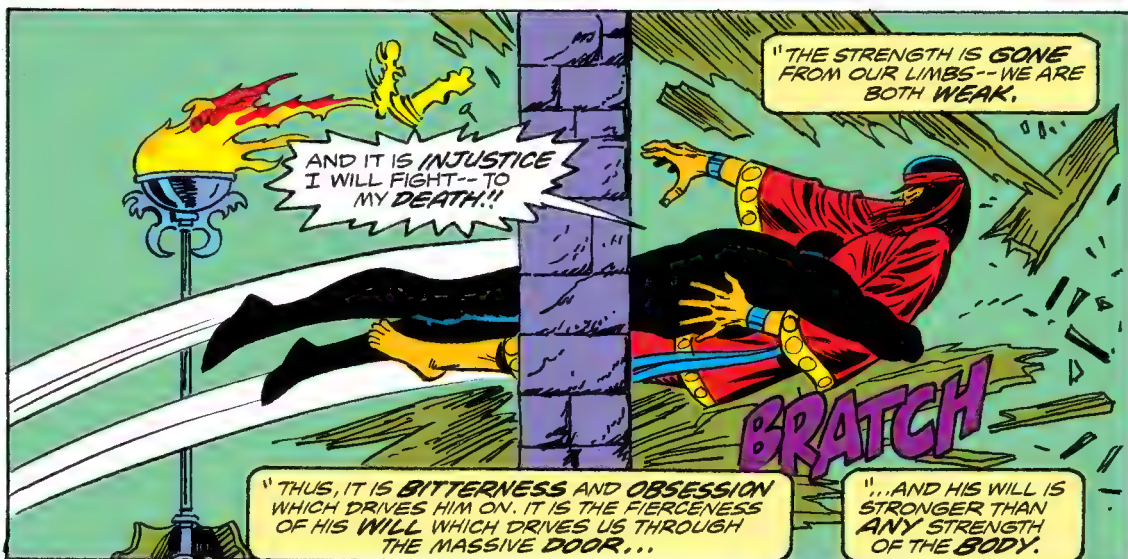
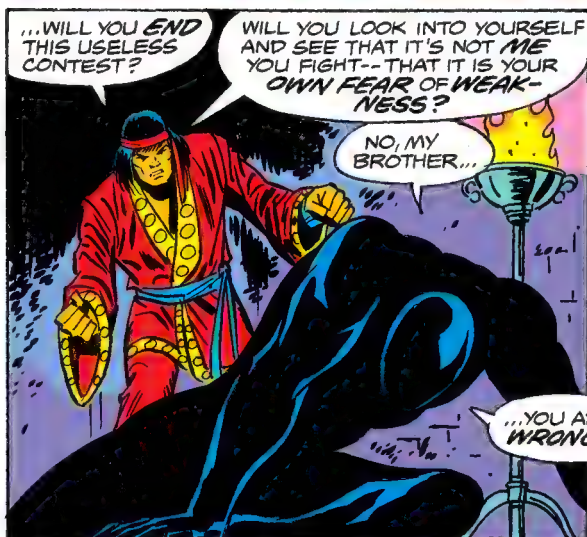
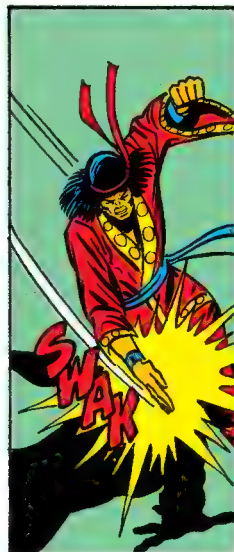
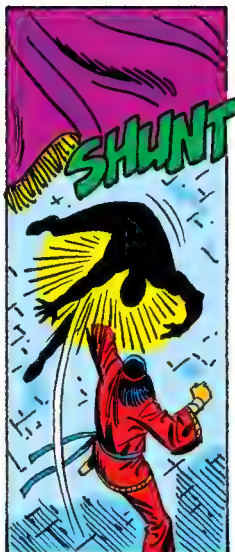


HIIYEEE

"--UNLESS HE IS **PUSHED**."







"WE ARE NOW IN A CHAMBER FILLED WITH GLOOM AND STRANGE DEVICES... WITH SOFT SOUNDS FROM SMALL ANIMALS..."

"...AND WITH A STRONG SENSE OF SINISTER EVIL WHICH DOES NOTHING TO DAMPEN THE FIRES WITHIN OUR SPIRITS."

"WE TRADE BLOWS, ONE FOR ONE..."

BUFT

"... AND EXCHANGE PAIN, MORE FOR MORE..."

FWAP

"IT PROCEEDS THUS FOR SEEMING ETERNITIES, THIS RAGING VIOLENCE WHICH CONSUMES US BOTH..."

CHUT

"... AND WHICH BLOCKS THE PATHS OF ALL ELSE FROM OUR MINDS..."

SWOK

"...UNTIL EXHAUSTION CLAIMS US, AND WE ARE BOTH SPENT, Languishing in our pain. Even our WILLS, now, HAVE DIED..."

IS THIS NOT ENOUGH, MY BROTHER? HAVE WE NOT BATTERED AND BEATEN EACH OTHER LONG ENOUGH? HAVE WE NOT FOUGHT WITHOUT HATE FOR TOO LONG--?

WE ARE EQUALS--TRULY EQUALS--AND THERE CAN BE NO VICTOR IN THIS CONTEST. WE CAN ONLY FIGHT UNTIL WE BOTH DROP.

PERHAPS WE ARE EQUALS, M'NAI, AND PERHAPS THERE CAN BE NO VICTOR BETWEEN US--BUT I HAVE ALREADY BEEN DEFEATED BY WORDS ONCE THIS DAY.

I WILL NOT LET YOUR WORDS DEFEAT ME NOW.

I WILL ATTEMPT TO PERFORM MY FATHER'S BIDDING UNTIL I CAN DO SO NO LONGER--UNTIL I DROP.



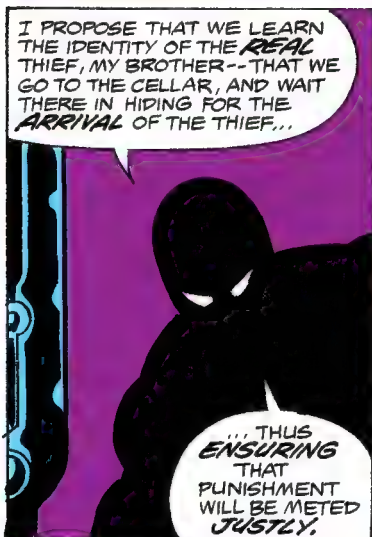
AND I WILL **RESIST** YOUR ATTEMPTS UNTIL I DROP-- AND THUS, MY BROTHER, WE SHALL **BOTH FALL.**

AND **THUS**, MY BROTHER, WILL **NOTHING** BE ACHIEVED. CAN YOU NOT SEE THAT SUCH AN END TO THIS STRUGGLE WOULD **NOT** FULFILL YOUR FATHER'S BIDDING?-- THAT IT WOULD ACCOMPLISH **NOTHING?**

THAT EVEN GLORIOUS **FU MANCHU** WOULD **REVISE** HIS WISHES IF FACED WITH SUCH AN END?

PERHAPS YOU ARE **RIGHT**, M'NAI-- BUT **ONLY** PERHAPS.

AND IF WE **SHOULD** END OUR STRIFE... **WHAT**, THEN, DO YOU PROPOSE AS AN **ALTERNATIVE?**



I PROPOSE THAT WE LEARN THE IDENTITY OF THE **REAL** THIEF, MY BROTHER-- THAT WE GO TO THE CELLAR, AND WAIT THERE IN HIDING FOR THE **ARRIVAL** OF THE THIEF...

...THUS **ENSURING** THAT PUNISHMENT WILL BE METED **JUSTLY.**



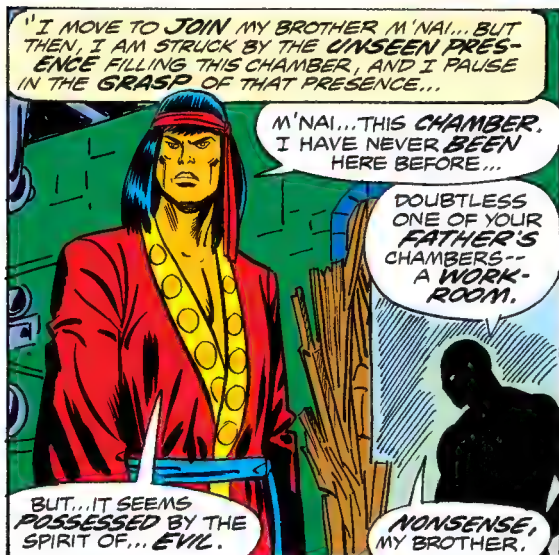
I...I...

VERY WELL, M'NAI. I **AGREE** TO YOUR PROPOSAL... BUT ONLY IF **YOU** WILL AGREE TO ACCOMPANY ME TO MY FATHER'S CHAMBERS SHOULD THE **"REAL THIEF"** FAIL TO ARRIVE BY **NIGHTFALL.**



YOU FORCE ME TO **TWIST** MY **BELIEFS**, MY BROTHER... BUT I WILL **DO SO**, IF IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO **END** OUR **BATTLE.**

COME.



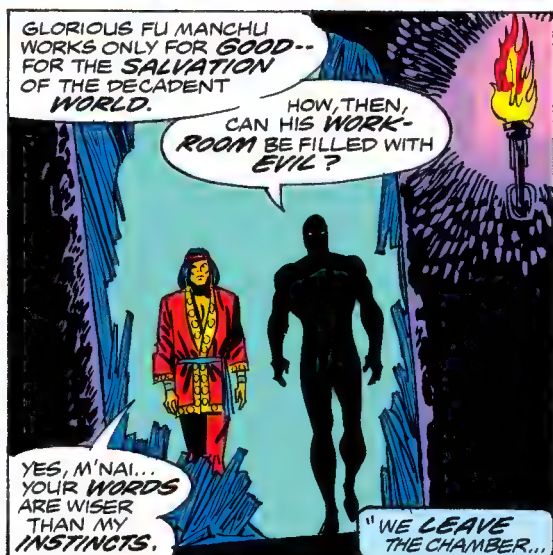
"I MOVE TO **JOIN** MY BROTHER M'NAI... BUT THEN, I AM **STRUCK** BY THE **UNSEEN PRESENCE** FILLING THIS CHAMBER, AND I PAUSE IN THE **GRASP** OF THAT PRESENCE...

M'NAI... THIS **CHAMBER**. I HAVE NEVER **BEEN** HERE BEFORE...

DOUBTLESS ONE OF YOUR **FATHER'S** CHAMBERS-- A **WORK-ROOM.**

BUT...IT SEEMS **POSSESSED** BY THE SPIRIT OF... **EVIL.**

NONSENSE, MY BROTHER.

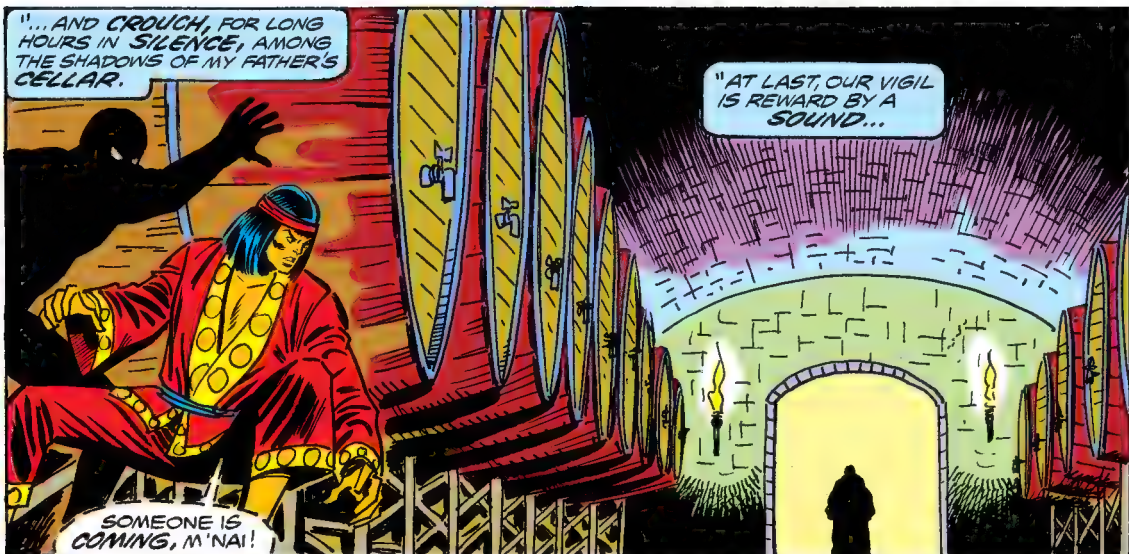


GLORIOUS **FU MANCHU** WORKS ONLY FOR **GOOD**-- FOR THE **SALVATION** OF THE DECADENT **WORLD.**

HOW, THEN, CAN HIS **WORK-ROOM** BE FILLED WITH **EVIL?**

YES, M'NAI... YOUR **WORDS** ARE WISER THAN MY **INSTINCTS.**

"WE **LEAVE** THE CHAMBER..."



"... AND CROUCH, FOR LONG HOURS IN **SILENCE**, AMONG THE SHADOWS OF MY FATHER'S CELLAR.

"AT LAST, OUR VIGIL IS REWARD BY A **SOUND**...

SOMEONE IS COMING, M'NAI!



BUT WHO?

WHO IS IT, MY BROTHER?

I... I CANNOT SEE...



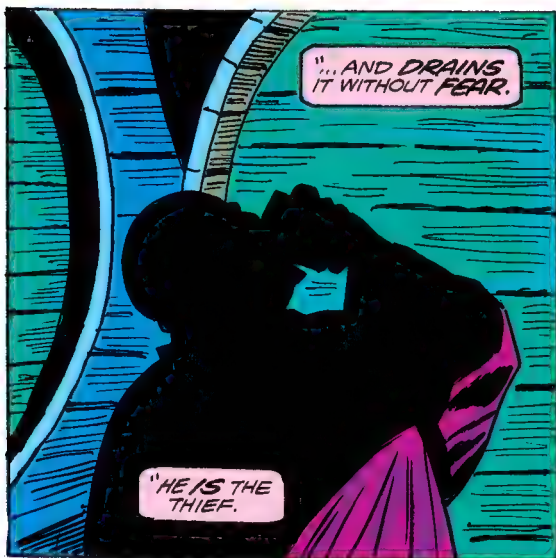
"THE SHADOWS ARE THICK, AND FILED DEFENSELY... LIKE BLADES OF GRASS CRUSHED UNDER FOOT.

"THE FIGURE MOVES FORWARD, **BOLDLY**, WITH A GAIT UNSUITED TO A THIEF.



"BUT NOW, HE STOPS BEFORE ONE OF THE STORES OF **DRINK**...

"... FILLS A CUP...



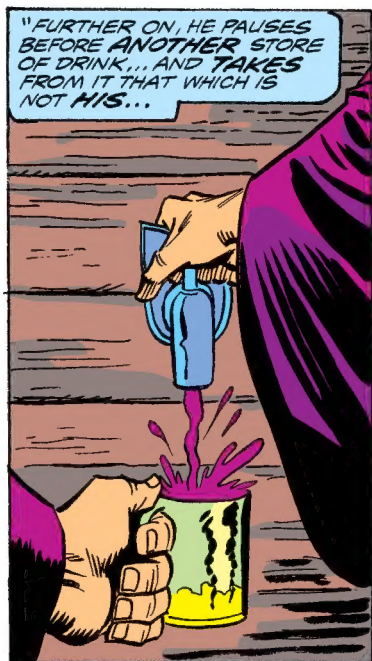
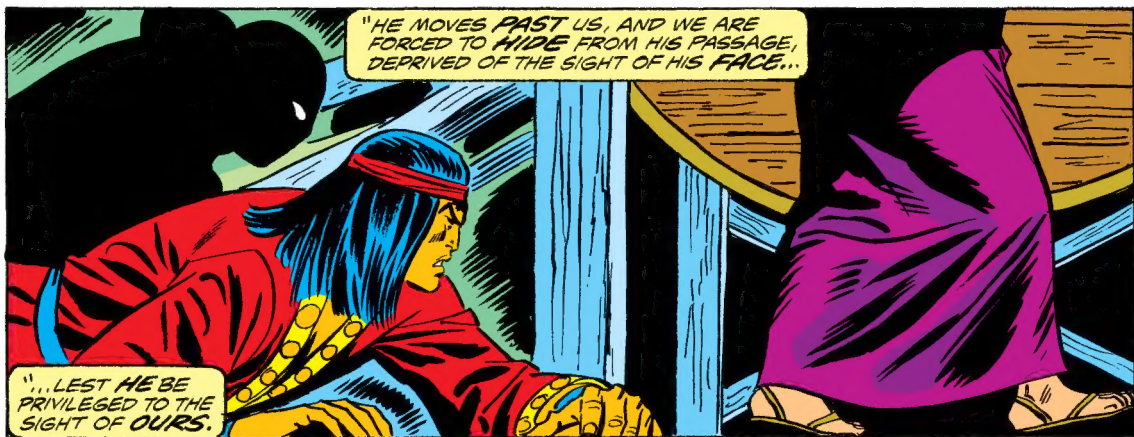
"... AND DRAINS IT WITHOUT **FEAR**.

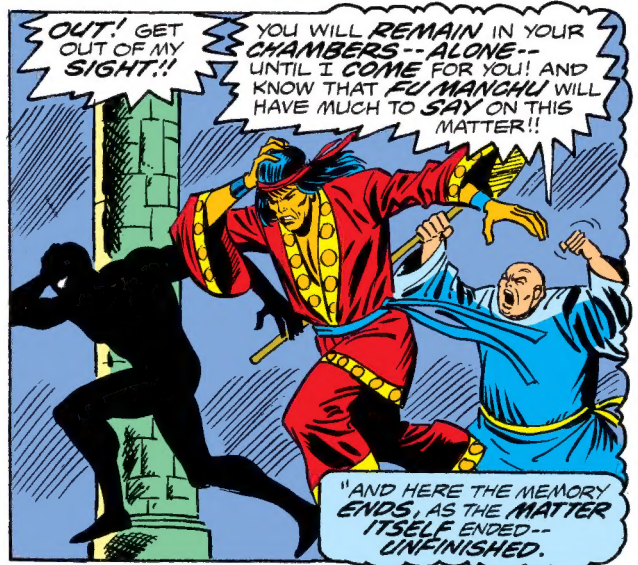
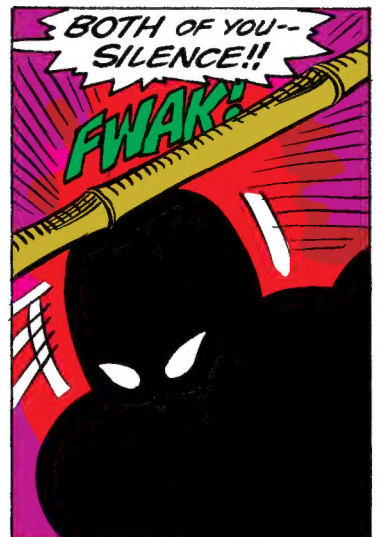
"HE IS THE THIEF.



YOU SEE, MY BROTHER? THE THIEF STANDS **BEFORE** US, WHILE I CROUCH AT YOUR **BACK**.

YES, M'NAI... BUT WE STILL DO NOT KNOW WHO HE IS...





"MY *MIND* RETURNS TO THE REALITY OF MY *BODY*, WITHIN LARNER'S DESTROYED *DWELLINGS*... AND IS FILLED WITH *QUESTIONS*...

"MY FATHER NEVER CAME TO US, AND NEVER SPOKE A WORD ON THE MATTER.

"PERHAPS HE KNEW NOTHING OF THE MATTER..."

"OR PERHAPS HE WAS MERELY *TESTING* M'NAI AND MYSELF, TO SEE IF WE WOULD TRULY *OPPOSE* EACH OTHER --TO SEE IF I WOULD *OBEY* HIM, AGAINST MY *BEST FRIEND* AND *ONLY BROTHER*-- AND IF M'NAI WOULD DO THE *SAME*..."

"...FEELING THAT THIS KNOWLEDGE MIGHT PROVE *USEFUL* IN THE... *FUTURE*."

"IF *SO*, THEN WE *FAILED* THE TEST IN ONE SENSE..."

"...BUT PERHAPS *PASSED* IT IN A *GREATER--* AND *UNEXPECTED--* SENSE."



"THE MEMORY HAS SHOWN ME THAT LARNER'S WORDS WERE *CORRECT*. A *TRAITOR* MAY BE *ANYONE*, EVEN HE WHO IS *LEAST SUSPECTED*..."

"...AND, IF ONE DOES NOT WISH TO *BELIEVE* THE TRUTH, THEN *PROOF* CANNOT *CHANGE* HIS *MIND*..."



"FOR, IN THE WORDS OF CHO LIN HIMSELF--

"THE COMFORTING IGNORANCE OF *PLACID ILLUSION*--



"--IS ALWAYS PREFERABLE TO THE *DISRUPTIVE CLASH*--



"--OF A *HARSH* AND *UNWANTED* TRUTH."



NEXT: PAUL GULACY REJOINS DOUG MOENCH WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF A *SHOCKING NEW* VILLAIN (AS WELL AS THAT *SUPER-SHOCK-ENDING* WE PROMISED YOU *CAST TIME*) IN THE, AHEM, *SHOCKER* CALLED--

THE CLOCK OF SHATTERED TIME!

MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 575 MADISON AVE. N.Y.C. 10022

Gentlemen:

I gotta tell you that MOKF #38 is the best comic I've read all year. Moench and Gulacy are the greatest team going. However, two requests: Please let Gulacy do a cover for the book—and get Shang-Chi out of his pajamas and into a decent looking suit now and then.

Mike Baron
10 B Mt. Auburn St.
Cambridge, MA 02138

No sooner said than done, Mike. Paul has already *done* a cover; unfortunately, it ended up as the splash page in issue #30. As for Shang-Chi in a suit, see issues #'s 39 and 40.

Dear Doug, Paul, and Dan;

There is very, very high quality coming out of your magazine of late, and I am writing to encourage a continuation of same. Issue #'s 33-35 have brought this series to another new high. Structurally, Doug, I think you—more than any other comics writer—have completely mastered every aspect of storytelling, and I want to dwell on this ability for a moment because of its relevancy to the comic art form. First of all, each issue must be able to stand by itself as a complete entity, even if it is only one part of a more complex story. And I'm amazed at how easy you make this seem, Doug; only by looking at other titles is my perspective restored. Too often, other writers are forced to extensively recap the action of previous issues, lest their present story make no sense. But I've gone over and over the last three issues of MASTER OF KUNG FU, and, considering how smoothly the overall story flows, it's just incredible that each individual issue is so tight by itself.

Secondly, I think three issues is a perfect length in which to develop a story. There is enough room to provide detail and completeness, but not too much to confuse or bore the reader... a fault of which far too many other comics are guilty.

Thirdly, the continuity from one storyline to the next has been excellent; tying Mordillo's actions to the Velcro story of previous issues was a perfect touch. Structurally, MASTER OF KUNG FU has it all.

Now about the content: Marvel's superheroes have encountered many mad villains in the past, but too many of them have been stereotyped and ridiculous. Mordillo, however, was a paradoxical stroke of genius. As a character he was complex, tragic, fully rounded, and entirely believable. One of the highest points of this trilogy was the inclusion of Mordillo's pride and joy, Brynocki. By his existence alone, Brynocki provided clear insight into the tragic madness which separated Mordillo from reality — and did so more effectively than any discussion between the major characters could have done. Marvel seems to inspire innovation and greatness in its writers and artists, and to some extent even in its readers.

In conclusion, I want to add that the development of the main characters in MOKF is entirely consistent with the quality found in the other aspects mentioned earlier. Smith, Reston, Leiko, and Black Jack are phenomenally real — and, of course, Shang-Chi remains the most honest character in comics. His flexibility in becoming an agent for Smith has only strengthened his identity, and he hasn't sacrificed his beliefs in the transition. MOKF is a great comic from all angles.

Rook Jones
3053 Tremont St.
Allentown, PA 18104

My Dearest Mr. Moench:

Your and Mr. Gulacy's handling of the saga of Shang-Chi has turned the series into one of my favorites. It is by far the most *engrossing* book on the market. The flight into fantasy is complete. However, after many hours of research, I can report conclusively that it is impossible to simultaneously read one of your fine tales and listen to an album by the Roto-Rooter Goodtime Christmas Band at the same time. Any other music or similar collection of sound cannot detract from the effect of your words or Mr. Gulacy's illustrations. I trust that the rest of Marveldom Assembled will accordingly take the proper precautions when next reading an issue of MASTER OF KUNG FU.

Am I finally taking the magazine seriously enough?

Gringo
(No Address Given)

Nope.

Dear People,

Back in 1940, Will Eisner began the greatest comics feature of his day. For years he was hailed as the master of the medium, and his stories are still required reading for anyone who wishes to experience truly outstanding comics.

In the 60's Steranko burst forth — a one-man show who took the essence of Eisner and evolved it into something even greater. And Steranko's work, of course, is also must reading for any true fan of the medium.

How could anyone top the work of these two men? Answer: No ONE person *has* topped them (although Starlin is plugging away at it). Instead, it has required a *team* of people to produce a series which can be justly called the best in the medium to date. Moench and Gulacy!

Moench and Gulacy have an outstanding flair for mood and pacing. They must provide an inspiration for Adkins; this is the best work I've ever seen him do. Kaweck's word balloons convey tone and inflection superbly. And Petra Goldberg's phenomenal coloring complements Gulacy and Adkins beautifully.

I'm surprised to find myself flinging superlatives; my compliments are usually sparse and quite often backhanded. To compensate, I've looked high and low for something to criticize about MOKF #38. Here's what I've found: There were too many sound effects on pages 11 and 22.

My sincere compliments, team.

William MacDonald Neville
P.O. Box 29
Cut Off, LA 70345

Doug and Paul echo your feelings about those members of our "team" who often receive less credit than they deserve, William. As far as they've concerned, Dan Adkins, Annette Kaweck, and Petra Goldberg are tops in their respective professions — and perfectly suited for Shang-Chi. We've had Dan all along, but Doug and Paul have long hoped to add Annette and Petra to the credits. And, at least on a semi-regular basis, it looks like they've finally succeeded.

Next Issue: The sizzling shocker called: "The Clock of ShatterTime!" (And, yeah, Paul Gulacy will be back at Doug's side, along with Dan and hopefully Annette & Petra.)
Until then...be good.